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REVISED/Minister to visit First Nations communities (07/07/13)

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FREDERICTON (CNB) - As a follow-up to the historic bilateral agreement signed between the Province and New Brunswick's 15 First Nations communities, Ed Doherty, Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, will visit all 15 First Nations communities in the weeks ahead.

The minister's tour has been postponed, and will be rescheduled at a later date. The minister's first visit will be St. Mary's First Nation, where he will meet with Chief Candace Paul and community members on July 17, 2007. The tour will continue with visits scheduled to Kingsclear and Metepenagiag First Nations.

"I am very pleased to follow up our bilateral agreement with a tour of the First Nations communities and to continue our dialogue with First Nations leaders all across the province," Doherty said. "By working together, we will be able to address many of the challenges that our Aboriginal communities face so we might arrive at solutions together."

The Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Province of New Brunswick Relationship Building Bilateral Agreement was signed on June 22, 2007, between the Province and all 15 First Nations chiefs at a ceremony in the Legislative Assembly. The agreement vows to reduce inequalities, improve services and promote economic development in First Nations communities.

The agreement fulfilled both a *Charter for Change* commitment to improve relationships between the two groups as well as a recommendation of the Self Sufficiency Task Force. The task force stressed that for New Brunswick to become self-sufficient by 2026, all First Nations communities must be self-sufficient.

Doherty said his visits will include meeting with elders, community members and touring various businesses and facilities.

"It is important for us to forge a new level of trust and co-operation. There is no better way to get this new spirit of co-operation underway than by meeting and seeing first hand the issues that affect our First Nations communities," Doherty said. "I look forward to visiting the communities and meeting the community leaders and members in the weeks ahead. I am confident that we will make significant steps forward together."

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